



May 27, 2014

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-14-24

SUBJECT: LTP—Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Fiscal Year 2014 Ogallala Aquifer Initiative

Action required by: July 7, 2014 (Field Offices [FOs])

Action required by: August 1, 2014 (Area Offices [AOs])

Action required by: June 20, 2014 (State Office [SO])

Purpose. Provide guidance for administering the fiscal year (FY) 2014 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI)

Expiration Date. September 30, 2015

Background

The OAI is designed through EQIP to provide producers with financial and technical assistance to reduce the quantity of water removed from the aquifer and to improve water quality using conservation practices on cropland and rangeland.

Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and Conservation Practices (CPs)

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and CPs are available in Attachment 1.

Only irrigated land that meets the requirement of having been irrigated a minimum of two of the last five years is eligible for the OAI. All land not meeting this requirement, including non-irrigated land, is ineligible.

Contracts developed under OAI must include at least one of the applicable core CPs, or must be completing a conservation system that supports core CPs that are documented as already applied on the land under contract.

Priority Areas

Priority areas in the OAI will be those that are within either a priority area for Water Quality (WQL) or Water Quantity (WQT) as seen in Attachment 3. WQL priority areas are those that meet 60 percent or greater chance of nitrate levels exceeding 4 ppm in recent groundwater recharge. WQT priority areas are those that have greater than 25-foot of decline. Both of these priority criteria are based on analysis of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) published data and as described in the OAI proposal document.

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson, Volkman

Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway Boulevard
Salina, Kansas 67401-4604

Phone: 785-823-4500
FAX: 855-533-5070
www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov

Screening Criteria

All applications will be screened and assigned a priority of HIGH or MEDIUM in Program Contracts System (ProTracts).

HIGH priority applications will include those located within the designated water quality or water quantity priority areas (Attachment 3). In order to receive priority based on one of these, that resource concern must be treated.

MEDIUM priority applications will include other locally important water quality/quantity concern areas located within the Ogallala Aquifer boundary.

In Kansas, these areas are designated as Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMA's), which are specific areas within Groundwater Management Districts (GMD's). To date GMD #4 has the only approved LEMA, Sheridan County #6 (SD-6). State Level Ranking Question 13 is specifically for LEMA's only and will be answered through CPGI.

LOW Priority applications will include all eligible applications not screened as HIGH or MEDIUM.

HIGH priority applications must be ranked, approved, and obligated before any MEDIUM priority applications are ranked or funded.

Applications not meeting screening criteria for priority HIGH or MEDIUM will not be funded through OAI.

ProTracts Ranking Tool

ProTracts fund code for this EQIP initiative is "Ogallala Aquifer Initiative."

A copy of the state and local ranking questions are provided in Attachment 2.

National ranking questions are consistent for all EQIP applications. Refer to Bulletin KS300-14-16 for additional guidance on answering national questions.

OAI does not offer Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), therefore any ranking question referring to the use of a CAP shall be answered "NO" so no additional ranking points are awarded.

All eligible applications shall be entered into the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI). All answers available on the CPGI report will be used to answer the corresponding question on the ProTracts Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT). The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts.

Deadlines

Although applications for EQIP are accepted continuously, the FY2014 application evaluation period cutoff date for OAI applications was set for March 21, 2014. All applications received by this date were entered in ProTracts on April 18, 2014.

FOs have completed conservation plans and application rankings on May 9, 2014.

AOs have completed peer reviews of rankings on May 23, 2014.

If an applicant makes a decision to change to their fund code to Water Enhancement Project Area (WEPA) formerly Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), they have a deadline of June 13, 2014 to submit their request. If a fund code change is made ranking and reviews must be completed again.

The SO Programs Staff will make funding decisions by June 20, 2014.

FOs will have all approved applications and documentation entered in electronic contracts (eContracts) by July 7, 2014.

Assistant state conservationists for field operations will ensure that all contracts have been obligated in ProTracts by August 1, 2014.

The regional conservationist shall review and obligate all approved applications of \$150,000 or greater as outlined in Bulletin KS300-14-41. The assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) shall submit questionnaires to the appropriate program manager as soon as possible to meet program deadlines.

Contact: Forward questions through established channels to Chad G. Volkman, Resource Conservationist, at chad.volkman@ks.usda.gov or (785) 823-4568.

(Signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments